8. Situation in Venezuela

President Betancourt decreed a partial suspension of constitutional guarantees on 28 November and called in the army to reinforce other government security forces in an effort to control four consecutive days of rioting in Caracas.

The disturbances, which may be a decisive phase in the contest for power, are almost certainly being promoted by pro-Castro leftists as part of a campaign of violence initiated in October to undermine Betancourt. The long-widening rift in Cuban-Venezuelan relations seems to be nearing an open break.

Betancourt is believed still to have the backing of most of the armed forces; moderate political elements and much of organized labor are likely to rally to his support.

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